



Foundation for Alcohol
Research & Education

Media Release

LYNHAM'S ELECTION A REJECTION OF NEWMAN'S WEAK ALCOHOL MEASURES

24 July, 2014: Public health experts meeting in Brisbane today believe Dr Anthony Lynham's resounding victory in last weekend's Stafford by-election represents a rejection of the Newman Government's weak position on alcohol harms.

With international and national drug and alcohol experts arriving for the opening of the 2014 Australian Winter School Conference, attention has once again turned to how best to address Queensland's rising alcohol toll.

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education Chief Executive, Michael Thorn, says Dr Lynham's election victory shows that Queenslanders are clearly unhappy with the Newman Government's failure to tackle alcohol harms in Queensland.

"As a leading surgeon in Queensland, Dr Lynham has witnessed the terrible impact of alcohol harms on the people of Queensland and as the former Chair of the Queensland Coalition for Action on Alcohol he has advocated extensively for the introduction of evidenced-based policies to reduce these harms. His election to State Parliament last weekend was a ringing endorsement of those policies and it sends a clear message to the Premier that Queenslanders want real action to tackle alcohol harm," Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn will facilitate an expert panel discussion at the Australian Winter School Conference on Friday that will ask why governments faced with rising alcohol harms continue to ignore the evidence of what works.

"Common sense would suggest that as alcohol harms increase, and as the personal and financial toll continued to grow, governments, desperate to solve the problem, would embrace evidence-based measures proven to work. That's not happening in Queensland and I think it's a fair question to ask the Premier why he steadfastly refuses to even consider adopting proven alcohol policy measures that would save lives and ultimately save the State money," Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn says the negative campaign run against Dr Lynham by 'No Curfew' campaigners offers some clues, highlighting the ways in which the alcohol industry exerts influence over the Queensland Government.

"*No Curfew* claimed to be a grass roots, broadly representative campaign, yet the reality is it was nothing more than a vehicle of the alcohol industry, its views and interests strongly aligned with the Liberal National Party, and being driven by players more concerned with protecting their financial interests, than of the safety of Queenslanders," Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn says the Queensland electorate of Stafford clearly saw through the 'No Curfew' campaign and says there are important lessons for the Premier about the electorate's desire for openness and transparency.

"The Queensland electorate of Stafford rejected the 'No Curfew' campaign. Voters clearly saw through the faceless Facebook page, and rejected the campaign's lack of transparency. Queenslanders want and deserve a genuine response to the alcohol crisis facing the State; one informed and led by the evidence, and one that puts Queenslanders before corporate interests," Mr Thorn said.

Michael Thorn (@MichaelTThorn) is available for interview.

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The **Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE)** is an independent, not-for-profit organisation working to stop the harm caused by alcohol. Alcohol harm in Australia is significant. More than 3,500 lives are lost every year and more than 100,000 people are hospitalised making alcohol one of our nation's greatest preventative health challenges.

For over a decade, FARE has been working with communities, governments, health professionals and police across the country to stop alcohol harms by **supporting world-leading research, raising public awareness and advocating for changes to alcohol policy**. In that time FARE has helped more than 750 communities and organisations, and backed over 1,400 projects around Australia.

For further information visit FARE's website: www.fare.org.au.